CNN, ABC Cancel Planned New Hampshire GOP Debates

January 17, 2024 **by Dan McCue**

Outside the Olmsted Center at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. It now looks like the candidate debate held here last week will be the last of the GOP primary season. (Photo by Dan McCue)

CONCORD, Mass. — CNN announced Wednesday morning that it is dropping plans to hold a Republican presidential primary debate in New Hampshire on Sunday after former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley said she would only participate in the event if former President Donald Trump did so.

Trump, of course, has thus far refused to participate in any debates with his rivals for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.

CNN's announcement came less than 24 hours after ABC News and WMUR-TV announced they too were pulling the plug on a

debate planned for Thursday at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire.

"Our intent was to host a debate coming out of the Iowa caucuses, but we always knew that would be contingent on the candidates and the outcome of the race," an ABC spokesperson said in a statement.

"As a result, while our robust election coverage will continue, ABC News and WMUR-TV will not be moving forward with Thursday's Republican presidential primary debate in New Hampshire," the spokesperson said.

CNN said much the same thing in an email sent to reporters Wednesday morning.

Addressed to journalists who had planned to cover the debate and with the words "Please Read" in all caps in the subject line, a CNN spokesperson explained, "CNN is no longer moving forward with a New Hampshire Republican Presidential Primary Debate, as only one qualifying candidate accepted CNN's invitation to take the stage.

"We will continue to pursue other opportunities as the campaign season progresses through 2024, including candidate Town Halls this week with Gov. Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, from New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire," the spokesperson said.

CNN's town hall with DeSantis was held on Tuesday. Its town hall with Haley is set for Thursday. Jake Tapper will moderate the event.

The cancellation of the debates caps an eventful week that began with the caucuses on Monday. Trump came away with an historically lopsided victory in that contest and Haley came in a

disappointing third behind DeSantis despite numerous polls that appeared to suggest she'd come in second.

In the wake of those results, Haley is said to have doubled-down on securing a victory in New Hampshire or at least coming in a close second.

Failing to do so would dramatically undercut her ability to claim she's the only candidate in the race with any chance of stopping Trump from getting the GOP nomination.

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